BUMED:382:WKP:bw
27 May 1970

Captain S. H. Horton, jr., MC, USN
Commanding Officer
Naval Hospital, Beaufort, S.C. 29902

Dear Captain Horton:

It was a pleasure to see you again after a 19-year hiatus. To coin a phrase, "A lot of water has gone under the bridge since 1951."

As you know, the Navy Medical Department has never been history-minded in the sense of developing a staff of researchers to collect and publish data. It has been fortunate, however, that a few people have had an interest in history and have preserved many interesting and useful bits of material. These data, mostly, have been preserved as extra-curricular activities, such as those put into book and monograph form by the late Captain L. H. Roddis, MC.

My current interest runs to many aspects of Medical history. Among these is the reconstruction of a definitive history of naval hospitals. In your immediate area there have been at least three: 1) your command at Beaufort; 2) the hospital at Parris Island; and 3) the hospital at Port Royal. The latter named certainly did not measure up to very imposing standards; probably, it was little more than a temporary wooden structure.

We know little about Port Royal & Port Royal Sound in the History Section. What is known is that during the Civil War that area was under considerable dispute and the Union Navy was quite active against Forst Beauregard and Walker, as well in a general ocean blockade. During that war and for an unknown number of years subsequently, medical facilities were present, often referred to in SG's reports and elsewhere as a "naval hospital."

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In my 30 years' active duty - in the Bureau and the "Field" - I realize that CO's hit the overhead when confronted with a request for "another damned report." I have tried to avoid this approach in gathering information. Rather, I have tried to find people with a natural interest in history and the vignettes that can be reconstructed therefrom. I have had some success thus far in uncovering much interesting data.

If there is someone at your hospital who you think would enjoy digging for possible background information relative to a Port Royal hospital, we would appreciate very much any information he might find. I stress the fact that his efforts should be voluntary - I'd rather lose the prospect of getting information than to be a party to "another damned report," under duress.

Actually, I would like to visit all the places personally and try to dig out data personally. That approach would be quite expensive and probably futile in many instances owing to time limitations.

You suggested there are many history-minded citizens in your area who might be glad to contribute any information they have. It is probable the Marine Corps has researched the area pretty thoroughly and may have leads. The Beaufort Gazette was not established until 1897, but there is a chance there might be some data available there.

One thing about my request: "There is no hurry." In so saying, however, there is an inherent danger of too many tomorrows. I would like to get some input within the next few months.

You will recall Admiral Norris asked for copies of current biography sheets and an official photograph from all captains and flag officers.

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I am trying to develop a biographic file as complete as possible. It is not necessarily limited to top ranks, but owing to space limitations, at present I am including none of lower rank unless he has done something unusual. Of course, I am interested in everyone, HN up. You may have the privilege of awarding some medals; any from Silver Star upward (on Medical Department people) I would appreciate it if you would ask your Information officer to send my copies of the Pix. Anything else you might believe to be of historic interest in relation to your command would be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

W. KENNETH PATTON
LT, MSC, USN (Ret.)
Medical History & Reporting Br.